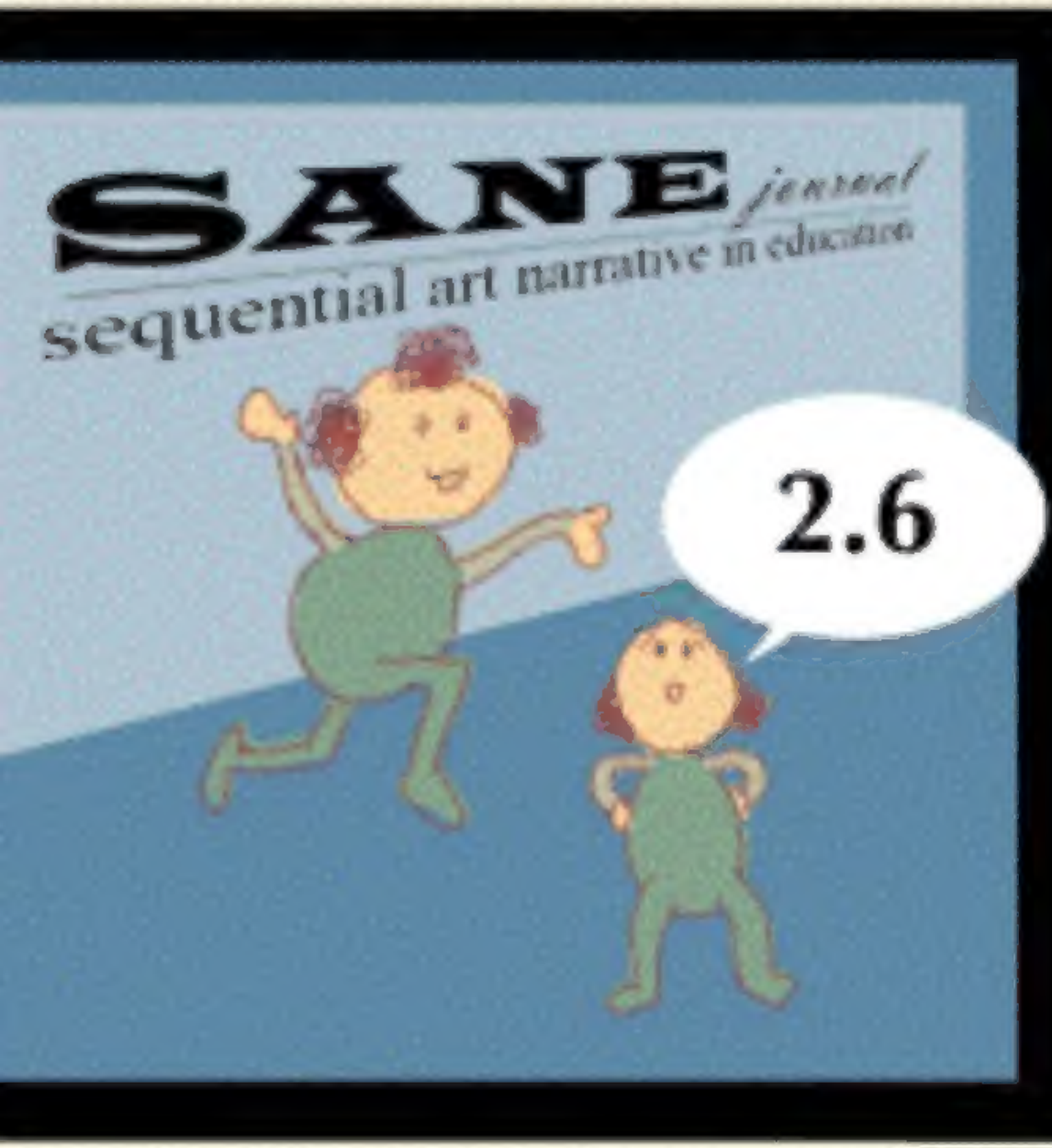
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Using comics as a tool to facilitate critical reflective practice in professional education.

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Abstract

This paper reports on the use of comics to help facilitate reflection on one's past as part of an early childhood education degree programme in Spain. It is common in professional education programmes in the health and education fields to encourage students to reflect on their past in order to explore how this has shaped their development and how it has influenced their career decisions. A challenge with more traditional forms of written reflections in this area is that they often become simple descriptions without any critical reflection on past experiences. To address this, the research reported here aimed to explore the extent to which comics had the capacity to afford alternative and novel ways of reflecting on one's past by providing students with the opportunity to create their own comics. Reporting on a sample of the completed comics and the students' reactions to the task, the study found that despite initial reservations and limited experience of comics, the students completed the task to an impressive level. While there was variation in the quality of the completed students' comics, they had utilised many of the unique affordances of comics to reflect their past lives. This paper discusses the implications of integrating comics into reflective practice activities and the challenges and opportunities they pose for practitioners.

Keywords: Reflective practice; autobiographical comics, critical reflection; professional education

Introduction

Reflective practice plays an important role in the professional education of many occupations, particularly within the education and health fields. For example, in the area of nursing education and teacher education, reflective practice has become central to pre-service programmes. There are many reported benefits of reflective practice in education. Perhaps the most significant is that reflection can help students learn from their experiences and improve their practice. This pragmatic approach to reflection as a tool of self-improvement is however only one use of reflection. Another important role of reflection is to enable students to explore their past experiences and to unearth and interrogate the values and assumptions that underpin their actions. This form of critical reflection in education is however a challenging endeavour as there is a tendency for students to simply recall past experiences and not interrogate them beyond a descriptive level (McGarr & McCormack, 2014). Educators are therefore challenged with exploring ways to help students explore past experiences in more novel ways to help them to reflect more critically on their past experiences. This paper reports on the use of comics as a tool in an early childhood education degree programme in Spain to address this challenge. A challenge with more traditional forms of written reflections in this area is that they often become opportunities for student teachers to write about their past in a way that shines a positive light on them, mindful of their teacher educators (Thomas & Liu, 2014). The research reported here aimed

to use the visual capabilities of comics as a reflective task to explore the extent to which comics had the capacity to afford alternative and novel ways of reflecting on one's past. In doing so the study aimed to disrupt the traditional conforming discourses evident in traditional text-based responses to such reflective exercises.

Comics as a tool for reflective practice

In exploring the role of comics in facilitating students' reflective practice it is firstly important to outline what they are and their unique affordances as a form of communication. In relation to a definition, El Refaie (2012) observes that the term 'comics' has been used to describe an entire range of different cultural objects. At their most basic, comics utilise both words and images to convey meaning that neither on their own could achieve (Harvey, 2001) hence they exist at the intersection of the written word and the visual image (Hatfield, 2008). The term 'graphic novel' is also used to describe the comics genre and while there are arguments that they differ from comics (Duncan & Smyth, 2017) they both employ the same techniques. Therefore, it could be argued that both meet Sabin's (1993) definition of 'a narrative in the form of a sequence of pictures with or without text' and as a result the graphic novel could be seen as an extended version of the comic. Comics exist in a range of types. For example, McCloud (1994) outlines a number of types of comics where some utilise both image and text whereas others are exclusively image-based. That being said, while a number of different 'types' of comics exist, as Ogier and Ghosh (2017) note, comics as a medium is a constantly evolving one as writers and artists continue to experiment with the medium. Despite its ongoing evolution, the centrality of the image and its visual aspects remains a defining feature of the medium.

As a form of expression, comics have long been associated with counter-culture and have thus traditionally held a marginal position in terms of how they are seen by the public. Ogier and Ghosh (2017) note for example that they have traditionally been, 'perceived as frivolous, childish reading material, mass-produced on cheap paper for light amusement' (p. 3). However, they are acquiring a greater level of social and cultural acceptance (El Refaie, 2012). This growing acceptance is based on both the increasing expansion of the genre as an artistic form and the recognition of the complexity of the genre. It is now recognised that comics offer a range of semiotic and temporal resources to the comic creator thus offering a unique form of expression. They can also offer engaging and demanding reader experiences as readers are challenged to interpret time-space relationships. They also demand the reader to engage their imagination to fully experience the comics message. For that reason, the deceptively simple first appearance of a comic masks the complex interplay between words and image and the intricate messages they can convey (Ogier & Ghosh, 2017).

Viewed through the lens of reflective practice, comics provide a unique opportunity for students to represent their insights from reflecting on their past experiences. Students can draw on a range of rhetorical resources to express their insights and reflections in ways that more traditional forms of representation struggle to achieve.

In saying that, the extent to which students can utilise this medium as part of a reflective activity has not been extensively explored to date. Teacher education has a traditional of more arts-based methods (Grushka & Young, 2014; Bailey & Van Harken, 2014) and in the area of comics a number of studies have reported on their benefits in higher education (Green & Myres, 2010; Rocamora-Pérez et al, 2017; Tribull, 2017). However, there remains a dearth of research into its use as a reflective tool. With this in mind, this study explored

student teachers' creation of comics to represent their past lives and examine specifically the extent to which they utilised the specific affordances of comics to present their reflections of their past.

Methodology

The study was conducted in a University in central Spain. The participants were pre-service early childhood education student teachers in the first year of study with an average age of 20 years. The 128 students (89% female) were enrolled on a module on media and communication. As part of this module students were provided with tutorials in the area of comics where they were introduced to the language of comics and their communicative affordances. These tutorials were provided by an expert in comics and prepared the students to undertake a comics-related task as part of the module. The task required the students to complete a 16-panel comic (either drawn by hand or using suitable software) representing their lives to date. Part of the purpose of the task was to develop the students' visual communication skills and for that reason the comics task was restricted to images only and not text. While this can reduce the opportunities available to the students to utilise some aspects of the language of comics, such as the juxtaposing of text with images, the task nonetheless provided opportunities for the students to utilise other more visual capabilities of the comics medium.

On completion of the task and after the assessment of the module was complete, the students were invited to participate in the study by 1) agreeing to have their comics included in the study for analysis and 2) participate in a short interview seeking their views of the comics task. Of the 128 students enrolled on the module 118 of the completed comics were suitable for analysis. Having analysed all 118 comics, six comics were selected to highlight how the students had effectively utilised the language of comics to represent and reflect on their past experiences. To select the sample, each of the authors analysed all comics and then met and agreed through discussion on the six comics the best utilised the language of comics. Five of these comics are presented below (the sixth was not included as it was similar to another comic presented below).

In addition to the analysis of their comics, these six students were also interviewed as part of the study to ascertain their views of the task. These interviews were conducted by one of the authors and were audio recorded for transcription purposes and subsequently translated. These interviews were thematically analysed following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phases of thematic analysis. This paper firstly briefly reports on the six students' interview responses to the task before exploring their specific comics. Following this, their implications for reflective practice in education are then examined.

Research Findings

Students' initial views of the task

When asked to talk about their initial reaction to being told that they would be undertaking a task involving the creation of a comic, there were different reactions reported. For three of the six students their initial reaction to the task was positive. Two of the students (student 1 and 6) had experience of reading comics and identified themselves as fans of the genre. As well as being fans of the genre, they also enjoyed drawing and therefore saw the task as an opportunity to apply their skills. A third student (student 2), while feeling that it was going to

be a challenging activity and that she had no artistic ability, nonetheless looked forward to it as she found drawing a relaxing activity. The other three students reported more negative initial impressions of the task. Student 5 reported the they believed the activity was 'weird and difficult' and similarly student 3 noted that they were astonished as they believed it would be an 'impossible activity'. Student 4 reported being in shock at being asked to do the task as she associated comics with fictional characters and not related to the lives of 'real' people. Her initial shock was however replaced by enjoyment;

> *I was in shock. I need to make a comic!! I sat down and asked myself, what do I do? I do not know what to do. But then it is true that since I started drawing, I thought, well, I believed I was a bad drawer and the truth is that, I like it, hey!!, I like it!, I like this!.*

Yet despite these initial negative first impressions, all students reported that the task was beneficial. In analysing the comments in relation to its value, the comments from the students could be categorised into two areas. The first related to the value of the experience in developing their visual literacy skills. All but one of the students noted the value of the comics task in helping them to gain the confidence to express their thoughts and feelings through visual images, as the following examples highlight;

> *I think now on it [the comics task] as a very good activity because I think we have learned to communicate in a different way, not only in written format.* (student 3)

> *Just using the images to express what you want to say helped me to express things with images ...* (student 4)

> *I have gained the confidence to portray my feelings with images. ... I can express my feelings better just with images* (student 1)

There was also reference to the value of the activity in developing broader skills in interpreting the visual word in which they live;

> *This course has helped me to be more watchful. For example, I observe the advertisements and analyse the images, the music they use, thinking about what they want to convey to us or in which way they are influencing us.* (student 4)

> *People must infer the meaning of the story told by the pictures, and each person makes it [their] own interpretation [sic]... When you draw you imagine things and you feel that you are expressing them as you think, then the person who observes it will create a story around it. It will be different or equal to that of the author.* (*student* 1)

The second value of the task as reported by the students related to the value of comics task in assisting their reflective thinking. All students reported that the structure of the comics task, and the nature of its visual representation, provided a scaffold to help them map out their reflection. The decisions made in relation to how to visually represent their experiences appears also to have been of benefit;

> *it helps you to reflect much more in-depth than if you were writing a text. You must think slowly, organise your mind and select the most relevant events of your life, those that have left a mark in your life.* (student 6)

> *It forces you to organise yourself. I had to think about the number of vignettes, and what I wanted to represent in each of them. It helps you to reflect and see those moments of your life that you did not consider important before and once you drew them in a vignette, you realise that your personality has been reflected in the comic* (student 4)

Analysing the comics

The second part of the findings involves an analysis of the selected comics. Despite the variation amongst the students in terms of their past experience of comics, this section aims to highlight some examples of specific characteristics of the language of comics that have been utilised by the students in representing their past lives.

Identifying with the reader

A key affordance of the comic medium is the use of more abstract images of people to increase the ability of the reader to identify him/herself with what is being narrated. McCloud (1993) notes that this abstraction in the image, that he refers to as 'cartooning' is a tool which enables the elimination of some details so that other details can be emphasised. This abstraction of the image increases the degree of universality of the central character thus increasing the reader's identification with the character and story. This abstraction of the central character also increases the reader's empathy. Therefore, rather than using realistic visual portrayals of people in comics, using more abstract symbolic representations can help the reader identify more with the story. Before exploring the use of this abstraction it is worth noting that the use of the term 'cartooning' here should not be confused with traditional notions of cartoons which are generally accepted as being either animated films or 'humorously intended single panel drawing with verbal caption beneath' (Harvey, 2001, p. 76).

The comic in Figure 1 makes use of the resource of abstraction as a fundamental element in the narrative. For example, in panel 6, the use of two intertwined human figures allows the author to show how the discovery of friendship played an important role in his life, but more importantly, the abstraction of the image increases its relevance and relatedness to potential readers. Therefore, readers can more readily identify with the challenges of youth represented in panel 9.

Figure 1. Student comic 1

Presenting emotion

The ease by which feelings are expressed through small variations of the drawing is another example of utilising the power of the comics medium. In figure 2 below for example, the image of the protagonist is represented with great simplicity, although the degree of abstraction is lower. For instance, the reader can identify the gender of the protagonist. However, a small variation of the stroke allows a tremendously efficient transmission of the author's mood at different times in her life. Unlike other comics in this study, the author has decided to focus on a rather large number of moments in her life when she was sad. The simple variation of the stroke of the mouth and the expression of the eyes transmits this feeling unequivocally, achieving with a great economy of means, the fundamental objective of this exercise, that is, to transmit not only the facts that have shaped the life of the author, but also how these facts have influenced them in their life trajectory. While there is a constant presence of sad moments, it only requires a simple change in the curvature of the mouth to transmit a moment of happiness as evident in the final panel. The considered nature of this representation and its development provides evidence of a deep engagement in this reflective task.

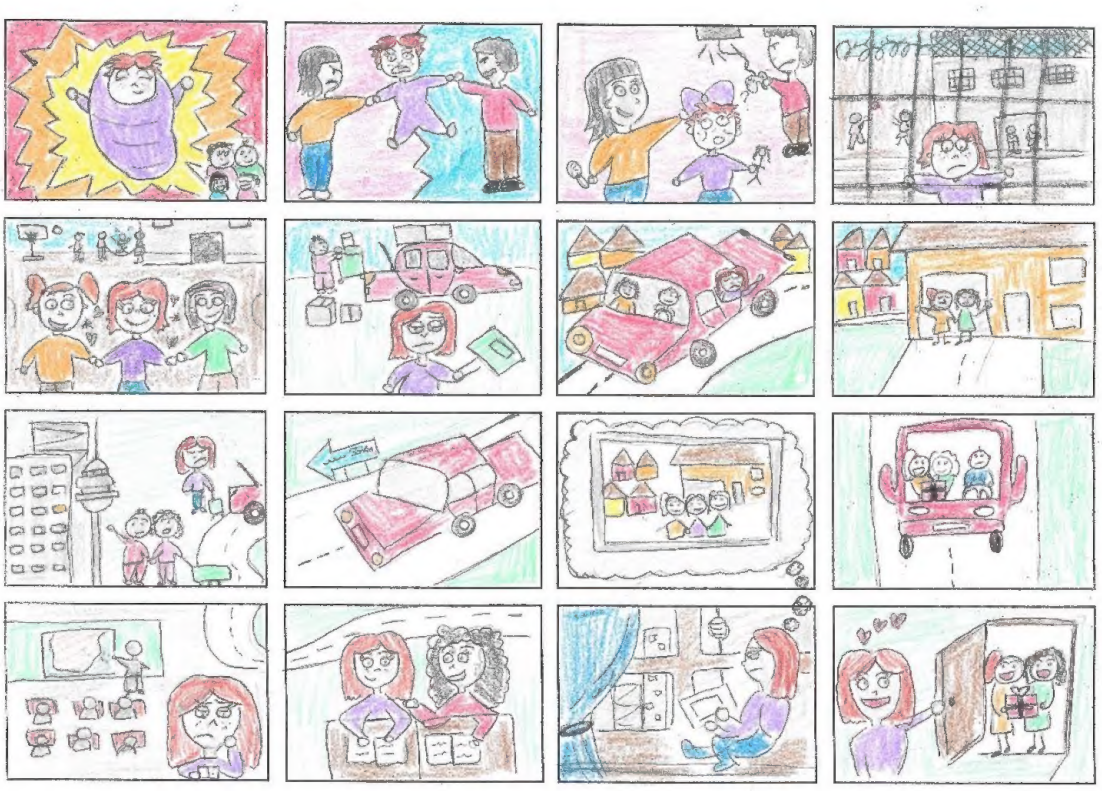

Figure 2. Student comic 2

Challenging temporality

Turning to the issue of temporal sequencing, Fellini (cited in Pintor, 2018) comments that the fixed and strict order of panels can, through the reader's gaze, restore in them the sense of time. In the task undertaken by the students, the ability to play with images to which the reader can breathe life is limited for two reasons. Firstly, the author cannot 'play' with the page composition given the fixed 16-panel structure. Secondly, being a single page comic, the author cannot play with the surprise derived from the page change. However, that does not prevent the use of the potential of the comic medium in several aspects. One of them is the apparent rupture of the linearity of the story that occurs in panels 11 and 15 of figure 2 above. This is made by enclosing the image of panel 11 in a thought bubble to indicate that this image is a memory in the moment in which panel 15 happens. However, it makes perfect sense that this panel is located in that place, because if we ignore the thought balloon, that position is the one that corresponds chronologically. In that sense, it is also interesting the use of the road in panels 7, 9, 10, 13 and 14 that allows, again, to include elements that subvert that temporal linearity of history without breaking it completely. The comic has therefore the possibility of playing with different levels of temporal sequencing. In the case of an autobiography, where the different moments of life follow a linear and interlaced trajectory, this can be subverted and challenged providing an additional level of complexity in the communicative process. Again, this level of complexity in the representation highlights a level of critical reflection on the process.

Varillas (2009) contends that in a comic, what is told (the level of story) is as important as how it is told (the level of discourse). For example, when selecting images, especially where one is limited to 16 panels, a global image must be reconstructed through fragmented images. Therefore, the selection of these fragments is essential for the final communicative goal. In

Figure 3 the global communicative construction is mainly done through the selection of the images chosen to tell the story. For example, three panels (panels 6 to 8) are used to show the moment of the head injury of the protagonist. Allocating three panels (when the author is restricted to 16 panels in total) shows the high importance of that moment in the author's life. The enlargement of the image of the head injury and the emphasis on the associated trauma has been deliberately chosen to highlight the significance of the event. Real time is frozen in these three images giving the reader time to recognize their importance. These difference between the real time and the time of the story is another potential of comics to reinforce the meaning of a specific moment.

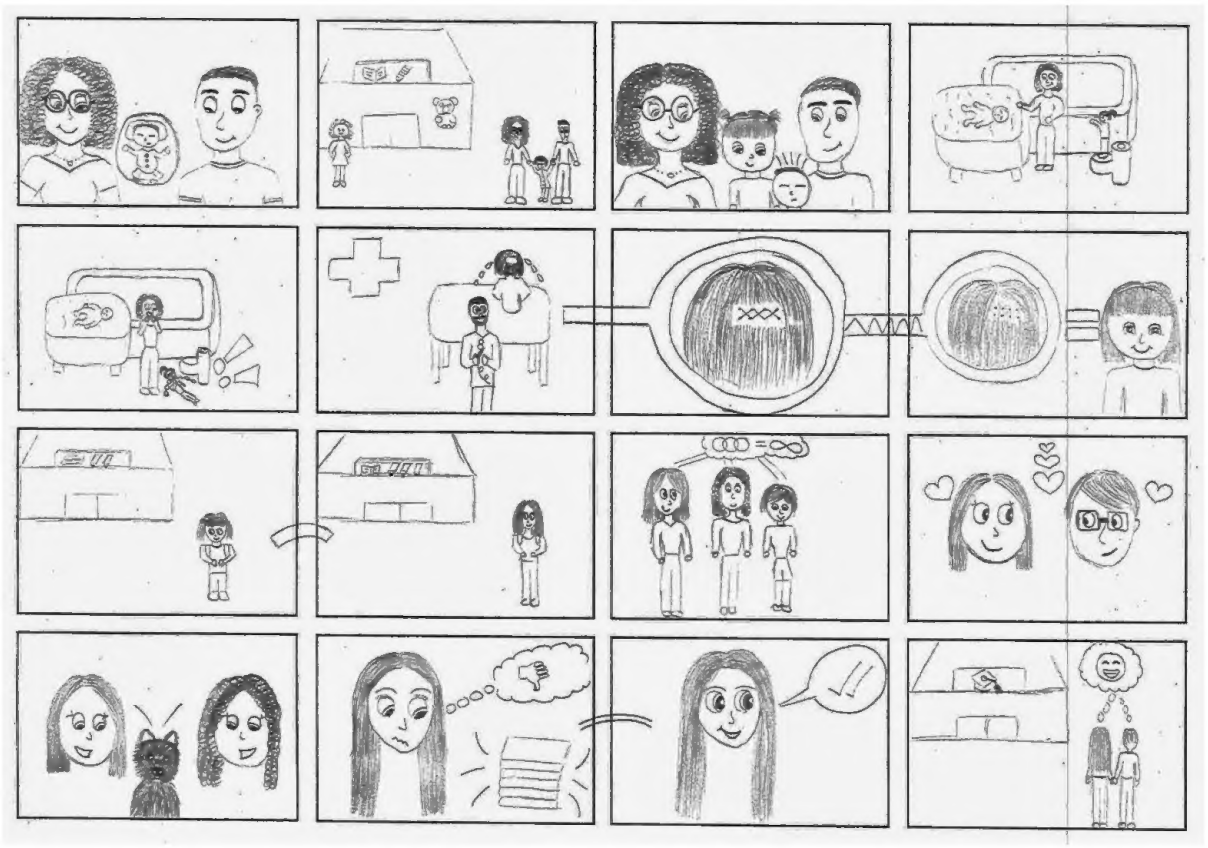

Figure 3. Student comic 3

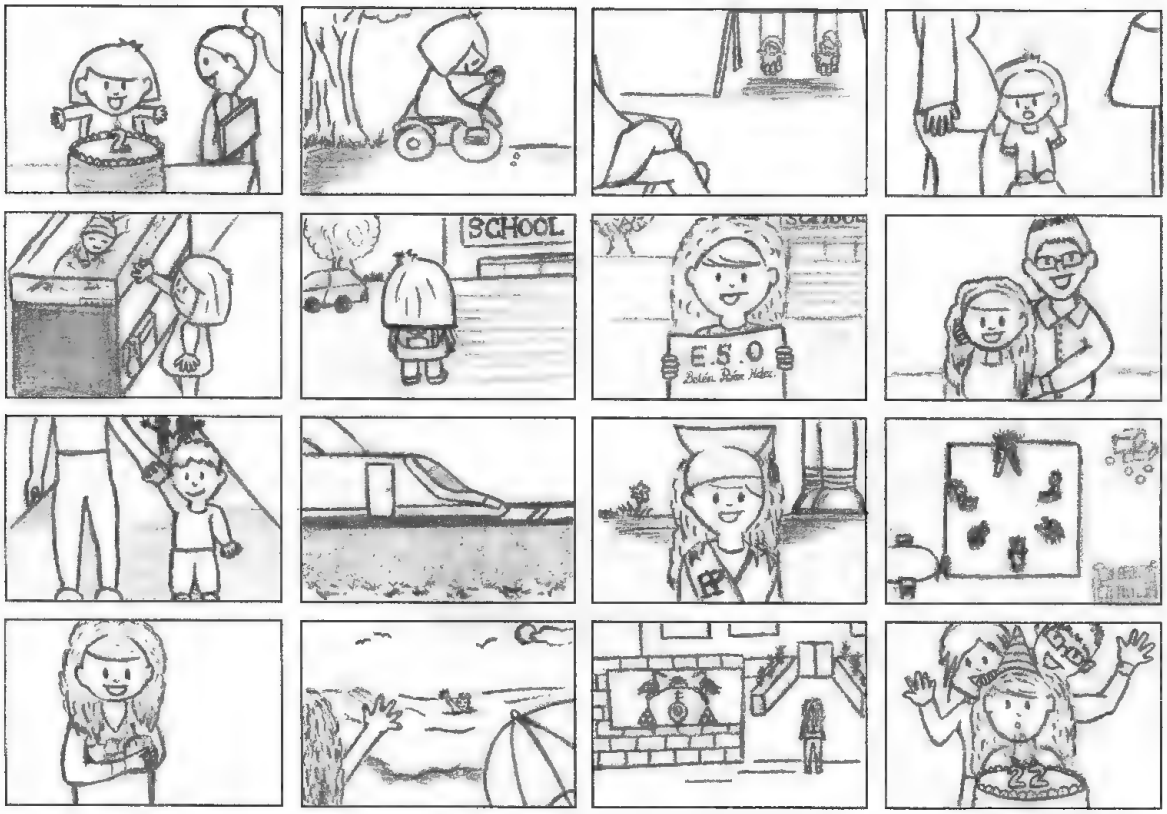

Figure 4. Student comic 4

Comic 4 draws on another aspect of comics affordances through manipulating the point of view of the images. For example, looking at panels 6 and 7 and focusing on the level of the story, these two panels narrate two moments that could be said to be important in the life of a student, such as the beginning of school and the achievement of the first academic degree. However, in these two panels, and at the level of discourse, the compositional choice of the protagonist's point of view is much more interesting. There is no better way to show the uncertainty associated with the first day of school than to show the character from behind, since it is the reader who builds the image of the character's face. That is, there is uncertainty in relation to the face expression, reflecting perhaps the uncertainty that the protagonist had at that time of her life. In contrast, after graduation, the image is no longer of uncertainty, but of happiness and success, for which the plane used is changed to a close-up where the character's full smile is shown. A face of happiness obtained after a vital process that has allowed the protagonist to overcome the uncertainty shown in the previous moment. Importantly, this process has occurred in the narrow space of the gutter. Hence what is assigned to the gutter is as important as what is presented in the panels. The decision-making process underpinning these decisions again, we argue, highlights a level of critical reflection on one's past.

Presenting subjective experiences

The comic in figure 4 presents many examples of how important the selection of the shot is when transmitting the emotional moments of the autobiography. Specifically, in this case, a very interesting use is made of what, in cinematographic terms, we could call the off-camera. So, for example, in panels 3 and 9, the same resource is used to show adults but leave their face out of the frame. This is achieved, not only to focus the attention on the children who

appear in those panels, but also to show the emotional distance that occurs between children and adults. A distance caused, not only because of the physical conditions derived from the difference in size, something that could be deduced directly from the observation of the images, but also because of the fact that adults, in some aspects, do not belong to the world of children and that is why they largely remain on the periphery of images or in the gutters of the comic. This circumstance is emphasized in panel 3 by the distance that exists between the children's playground and the place from where the adult watches them, in the distance, avoiding the possibility of the two worlds intersecting.

Continuing with the idea of the difference between the level of story and the level of discourse, it is important to consider that this difference can also be represented at a temporal level, an issue that, as we have already seen, is fundamental in comics. Thus, if we focus on the comic in Figure 5, and more specifically on the panels that go from 10 to 13, you can clearly see the ability to show a certain elapsed time. This is achieved through a selection of specific moments drawn from that time that emphasise a cause-consequence relationship between them. One of the greatest potentials of comics is the relationship between continuity and discontinuity of images. Panels 10 to 13 (together with the information provided by panel 7) clearly show us how the gift received on the 18th birthday by the protagonist led to an injury that prevents her from playing volleyball and led to her taking on a refereeing role as a consequence. This highlights the affordance of the comics medium to establish cause-effect relationships through the inter-iconic space between panels. This is what Groensteen (2007) calls 'iconic solidarity' where image acquires its full meaning through its coexistence with the other images within the comic.

Figure 5. Student comic 5

Discussion

From the onset, the paper set out to explore the extent to which comics could be used in the reflective process and specifically in facilitating alternative ways to present past experiences and reflect on them. A challenge with many reflective exercises that require students to reflect on their past lives is that the reflections become essentially descriptions of past experiences with little analysis of these past events (McGarr & McCormack, 2014). Hence it is worth considering the extent to which this comics task provided students with the opportunity to move beyond simply describing their past experiences.

On the one hand, some of the comics created by the students showed that they were used in a simplistic way to present a series of images that described the major points in their lives and there was no utilisation of the language of comics in their presentation. Hence, the comics could be seen as replacing a simple written description of their past lives with a visual description of them. Yet even if this is the extent of the students' output, such a task is nonetheless beneficial as it aids the development of the students' visual literacy skills. As the findings section highlight, this was mentioned by the students in the interview excerpts. In addition, the restriction of the comic to a 16-panel structure also challenged the students to identify what they would consider to be the most significant incidents and turning points in their past lives. Having to make decisions in relation to what to include and exclude and how to visually represent them could potentially act as a catalyst for future reflective thinking.

On the other hand, some students did use the opportunity to utilise the language of comics as highlighted in the examples provided. For these students, the nature of the task challenged them not only to present their past lives but also engage in a level of analysis of their experiences, thus requiring them to make decisions not only on what was presented but also how it was presented. In this way, the students were not simply recalling and *presenting* their past lives but rather *representing* them. This analysis and interpretation highlights the reflective component of the task that extends beyond a mere description of their past experience. It could be said that the act of creating these comics encourages the students' reflective thinking as it commands the student to identify critical incidents, consider their temporal order, the multiple perspectives of these events and the visual way in which they could be presented so that their key messages are communicated. Therefore, having the possibility of playing with the language of comics, considering the way in which significant events are visually portrayed, the iconic solidarity of the images and the information assigned to the comics gutters can act as a catalyst for thinking and reflecting more deeply on one's past lives. For a group of students previously in-experienced in comics design that were provided with training in comics, this study shows that in a relatively short period of time, the language of comics can be mastered effectively, thus opening up this form of communication as a reflective tool in many professional preparation degrees where such autobiographical reflective tasks are required.

In saying that, there are challenges that remain. The first relates to the perception of comics, both within some educational circles and society in general. As the findings highlight, the perception of comics as a childish and trivial form of expression surfaced in this study as evidenced by the students' initial reaction to the task. Therefore, despite El Refaie's (2012) contention that comics are acquiring a level of social and cultural acceptance as legitimate and credible forms of expression and communication, it appears there is a way to go in this regard. That being said, the increasing recognition of the importance of more visual forms of

literacy, and the contribution comics can make in addressing these literacies, is likely to accelerate their acceptance in education into the future.

The second challenge relates to the assessment of comics in the field of reflective practice. Shifting reflections to this more visual form of communication highlights the need to develop new forms of analysis of these multimodal forms of expression so that more critical forms of reflection can be identified within them. As Bateman and Wildfleuer (2014) comment, 'as the analysis of comics comes increasingly into the focus of scientific attention, accompanying issues of how such analysis can be reliably performed raise themselves with growing urgency' (p. 374). Without such guidelines there is a possibility that the reader (and assessor) of such reflective exercises may be unable to identify the performativity aspects prevalent in many students' reflections where the student appeases the assessor by reflecting on issues they believe are important to the assessor rather than their own practice. Effective use of the unique language of comics may camouflage this performativity element and hence one's command of the language of comics may become what is being assessed - rather than the complexity of the reflection it is constructed to portray. For example, the student may utilise techniques to increase the universal appeal of their autobiographical comics, in order to appeal to the assessor's empathy towards their past experiences. In addition, the omission of detail from comics, and strategically assigning certain experiences and time periods to the comics gutters can also be a convenient way to bypass more complex and problematic elements of one's past that merit exploration and interrogation. Further still, experiences assigned to gutters may be placed there on the basis that the omissions are self-explanatory. In these cases, this may show evidence that the students have not reflected on the assumptions underpinning the recollection of their past lives. Not recognising that many of their assumptions may be socially determined and hence the norms of their lives that they take for granted are not universally experienced by others, could be seen as evidence of a lack of critical reflection on their past. For that reason, while such comics are hugely powerful forms of expression, and we argue can greatly assist the reflective process, what is perhaps also required in such presentations is a justification and rationale for their content by the student, otherwise there is a possibility that the assessor may project meaning and significance to elements of the students comics beyond the original intention of the creator.

A further potential limitation of the comics medium as a reflective tool may relate to the difficulty of the author to portray challenging aspects of their past lives such as neglect, abuse or trauma. It may well be that the absence of such elements within the comics is not due to the students trying to present their past lives in a positive manner as possible but instead reflects their inability to express these challenging experiences in a visual way. That being said, as part of the training the students received in their preparations to undertake the task, they were provided with examples of a diverse range of comics and their expressive capabilities. This may suggest that both the novel task of creating comics and their need to present their past in a positive light may have equally influenced the nature of the students' comics.

Conclusion

Moving towards more powerful forms of communication and expression in reflective practice brings enormous opportunities and, as this paper has highlighted, comics are a particularly good medium in this regard. The study has highlighted that despite initial reservations and limited experience of comics the students completed the task to an impressive level. While

there was variation in the quality of the completed artefacts, the sample of work highlighted here shows that the students had utilised many of the unique affordances of comics to reflect their past lives. In saying that, one must be careful that the novelty of this medium (particularly in professional fields that have not traditionally utilised them) does not result in assumptions of innovation by virtue of their use alone. Rather than critically reflecting on their past, there is every possibility that students would use the language of the comics to conform to socially accepted understandings of recalled events and carefully construct accounts to appease the assessor. In these cases where little critical reflection has occurred in the realisation of the comic, can the educator recognise this within the completed artefact? What is being assessed in this context, the students' command of the language of comics or their ability to use this language to reflect critically on their lives and communicate this visually? Such differences may appear subtle but are quite significant. Notwithstanding the value of comics in encouraging critical reflection, further research is required to explore this particular aspect.

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Empirical Drawings: Utilizing Comic Essays in the Social Studies Classroom to Teach Citizenship

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Empirical Drawings: Utilizing Comic Essays in the Social Studies Classroom to Teach Citizenship

Cover Page Footnote

I would like to acknowledge my students who allowed me to use their comics: Katie Tennant, Christina Schell, Zachary Williams, and Collen Gill. I obtained permission from these students and they are all acknowledged in the paper.

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Empirical Drawings: Utilizing Comic Essays in the Social Studies Classroom to Teach Citizenship

The purpose of this paper is to show how the comic's medium may be a powerful tool for secondary social studies teachers, as well as those who prepare social studies teachers, to utilize in their classrooms with regard to citizenship education. Specifically, this paper presents an assignment which has students draw a comic essay instead of writing a traditional essay paper. This article also presents some ideas in comic format. I have written this article mainly for secondary K-12 social studies educators and college educators. I am a college professor and I assign a number of comic's assignments in my classes and I have included some of those examples in this paper to guide practitioners.

Context

It goes without saying that essay assignments are important aspects for instruction in social studies education. While all essay assignments vary, students generally must create a defendable historical claim, back this claim up with evidence and cite other thinkers in this process. The essay allows students a voice, puts them in conversation with those that came before, it allows them to weigh and analyze evidence and ultimately create an original thought. In the widest sense, I believe this process to be the bedrock of good thinking and the type of thinking required of citizens living in a republic.

Of course, the republic that American students inhabit, students who are "citizens-in-the-making" (Leahy, 2014, 52) is a volatile one, rife with 24/7 internet connectivity, social media, sound bite news and propaganda to name a few things which can hinder or complicate meaning making, understanding and common discourse (Kincheloe, 2001; Drew, Lyons & Svehla, 2010, Runciman, 2018). So, does the essay model described in the previous paragraph really hold up anymore? Is that model of truth telling and meaning making outdated in an era when politicians and pundits rely on fake news, memes, sensationalism and appeals to emotion? Americans and citizens across the globe in various political systems may now increasingly find themselves asking what is true and experiencing a type of anxiety regarding this question. In short- it is hard to know what to believe, and the obstacles involved in finding, verifying and believing a truth may turn some off to the process and in more sinister cases, may be a method to manipulate and fear monger (Duncombe, 2019; Illig, 2020; Roberts, 2019).

While I have referred to this state of affairs in a largely negative light, I think there is an opportunity for secondary social studies teachers to re-think their pedagogy and how they approach citizenship education. Social studies education has at its heart the fostering of citizenship. The definition of citizenship however varies from more conservative formulations which prize the transmission of facts and heritage to more progressive notions which inculcate a sense of questioning and criticism in students, and which encourage students to diagnose and remedy situations of social injustice (Ross, 2014; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). I am a proponent of the latter. Citizenship, at least for this paper, means attention to injustice and vulnerable populations and the creation of a better life and society for ourselves and posterity through nonviolent means and deliberation. And now citizenship must be considered in the volatile environment described above. Democracy and citizenship are dynamic entities, they evolve (Dewey, 1939; Parker, 1996; Vinson, 2012), and as a result, pedagogical methods for those that teach citizenship must evolve as well. That is the overall purpose of this paper, to showcase a new method to teach citizenship in high school social studies classrooms.

Drawing off the sentiments above, one way in which democracy continually changes is with regard to the notion of truth. Duncombe (2019) argues that progressives need to tell a better truth. Progressives must utilize signs, symbols and stories to tell the truth. To be sure, Duncombe (2019) does not posit that there is one verifiable truth "out there" which we must find. There is a reality and a true state of affairs, but this reality must be "refracted through the imagination" (20). In order to truly create powerful political messages that resonate, we must appeal to people's hopes and dreams (Duncombe, 2019). Of course, this form of truth telling is not meant to be fantasy or propaganda. The Nazi's provide the most ominous example of this practice. They propagated their version of the "truth" with symbols and propaganda. And today, as noted earlier, we see a number of questionable entities peddling all sorts of "truths." Rather, what we need is a better form of truth which can inspire people. Those who engage in this form of truth telling must base their ideas on reality, but they must go past the real and create a dream which inspires people to act (Duncombe, 2019).

Utilizing the Comic's Medium

The comic's medium gives students a number of tools at their disposal to create and convey new types of messages and write new types of essays in the volatile political environment we find ourselves in. For one thing, the creation of nonlinguistic representations of material has been demonstrated to be an effective pedagogical practice (Kolk, 2020). Similarly, the creation of comic's can aid students in understanding how to structure nuanced messages that incorporate linguistic and imagistic elements. Kolk (2020) goes one to note: "When creating comics, students learn to guide their readers' thoughts and feelings with pictures and dialogue, building more sophisticated communication skills that will help them as they work on debate and persuasive writing projects." Moreover, Kolk (2020) calls attention to need for inference between panels, which forces students to think about context to guide the readers. This notion of inference between panels aligns with McCloud's (1994) well known ideas of closure. Students must think about what they do not draw and what they leave to the reader's imagination and how this affects their messaging.

The use of the comic's medium is especially adept for the purposes of studying history. Santos (2019) argues that the use of graphic novels in historical study calls attention to "history as an editorial and curative process." Similarly, Getz and Clark (2016) note that history is a process of interpretation, and further, that the graphic novel form allows for historians to attempt to visually represent past times. In short, the creation of a comic essay allows students to get their hands dirty with the historical process. Chilcoat (1993, 2), who had his students create a comic to grapple with the events of the civil rights movement argues that: "The comic book allows students to take verbal-linear-analytical information from various primary and secondary sources and, through a visual-aesthetic-creative means, construct this information into personal interpretations and conclusions." Cromer and Clark (2007, 583) note that "graphic novels that are rich and multilayered are one means to appreciate the complexity of history." History is not linear, it is a complex entity (Kincheloe, 2001) and having students create a comic essay can allow students to see complexity first hand. And it is for these reasons that I believe that the comic's medium can help students- citizens- tell a new type of truth, a more powerful truth that resonates. Students can use the comic's medium to create new historical narratives and question and disturb the status quo- which aligns with the progressive vision of citizenship laid out earlier. The comic's medium may also be attuned to Duncombe's (2019) notion of truth. Throughout this article I will examine how specific features of the comic's medium, such as paneling and character placement, to name a few items, can be utilized for the purposes of citizenship and

historical thinking.

One of the most important components to this assignment, and really any student created comic, is that a comic allows for many different interpretations- even interpretations that the creators did not intend. This is because readers bring their own ideas and experiences to the comic page and these things interact with what is on the page (Duncan, 2012; Duncan et al., 2015). With that said, I brought my own ideas and interpretations when I analyzed my student's creations. Of course I spoke with them about their pages, and we discussed as a class and on online discussion boards, but ultimately, the interpretations put forth here are my own. And this is important in a wider sense. As citizens, we come together to discuss history and current events, and our own experiences influence how we perceive and what we believe and how we remember. And from these varied viewpoints, we have try to arrive at some compromise. So, analyzing comics may help students (and instructors!) become comfortable with varying interpretations which is crucial to functioning in a republic.

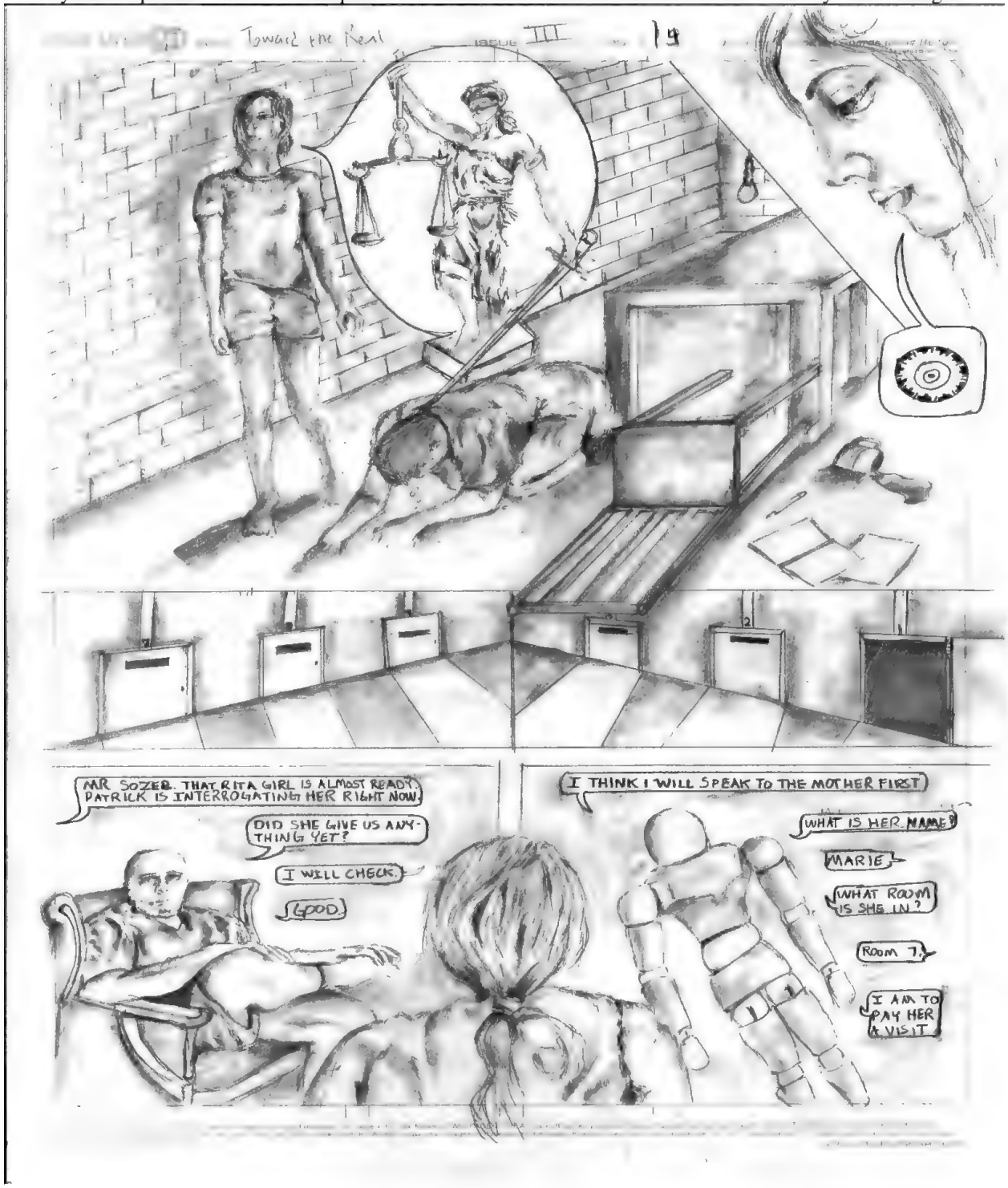
Up to now, I have set forth my arguments in a traditional format- even as I argue for non-traditional methods. So, to practice what I preach, the next portion of this essay utilizes the comic's form to convey some of the ideas above. As Kelley (2010, 6) has argued, art is not simply an "adjunct" to text, art is powerful and has its own meanings. As such art can be yoked to text (Duncan et al, 2015; McCloud, 1994; 2006) to create powerful statements which could not be said with art or text alone. Further, this potential can be put toward a progressive type of citizenship which appeals to people's hopes and dreams. The following comic pages I think leave the reader with more to ponder, more than my words might. As a scholar-artist I have created a graphic novel titled *Toward the Real*. This is a fictional graphic novel but in it I grapple with a number of issues present in this article such as communication beyond written and spoken language and move toward a vision of communication that embodies symbols and images as well. It is some of those pages that are supplied below.

Figure 1. Toward the Real, page 7. One this page, the protagonist, named Rita, receives training in how to communicate in images. She is reluctant at first but then masters this skill. Here, I tried to show an onslaught of images to overwhelm the reader. I started the page with a traditional format, three standard panels across, and then moved to a much more non-traditional sequence to jar the reader.

Blue Line
Toward the Real
ISSUE
PG 7
Pro Comic Book Art Boards Item# BL1001
YOU MUST TAP INTO THAT QUIET UNIVERSE AND USE IT TO SPEAK.
HOW?
SEE THE DESIGNATION BETWEEN REAL AND UNREAL AS ILLUSIORY NECESSARY FOR UNDERSTANDING, BUT FALSE
WORDS ARE FRAGMENTS AND EXCREMENT DO NOT SPEAK IN WORDS. SPEAK IN SUMMER BREEZES AND PAINTINGS. SPEAK IN INNOCENCE AND REASON SPEAK IN MUSIC AND REVALATION
I.. CAN'T
YOUR FATHER MADE IT POSSIBLE. YOU CAN DO THIS. WE SHARE HISTORY AND HERITAGE NOW. WE SHARE GENOCIDES AND WAR USE IT ALL TO SPEAK
SPEAK TO ME WITH THEM
I.. I..
NO WORDS
I..
SPEAK WITH THEM
...
YOU MUST FORGE NEW LINKS BETWEEN NAME AND THING...

Figure 2. Toward the Real Page 13. On this page, Rita uses her new found power to overwhelm her captor. Again I follow a similar pattern by starting with a traditional panel sequence. On this page, I also tried to show Rita as small and seemingly intimated by her captor- until she unleashes the image speak on him. Since he cannot understand this mode of communication, he breaks.

Figure 3. Toward the Real Page 14. Rita further subdues her captor. Here I use a well-known symbol of justice, as well as a symbol of Bentham's panopticon and a mannequin. In the bottom portion of the page Rita is also outside and beyond the panels. This is an example of how an artist can blend content and form to convey new messages.


Toward the Real
ISSUE III
19
MR SOZER. THAT RITA GIRL IS ALMOST READY. PATRICK IS INTERROGATING HER RIGHT NOW.
DID SHE GIVE US ANY-THING YET?
I WILL CHECK.
GOOD.
I THINK I WILL SPEAK TO THE MOTHER FIRST
WHAT IS HER NAME?
MARIE
WHAT ROOM IS SHE IN?
ROOM 7.
I AM TO PAY HER A VISIT

Drawing the Essay

First and foremost, the writing of a credible and defendable claim is paramount. Booth and colleagues (2008) offer an excellent examination on the facets of research in their work *The Craft of Research*. Booth and colleagues note that researchers must produce a claim, reasons for the claim and evidence to support all of this. Further, good researchers must also anticipate possible criticisms of their claim and how they will respond. So, the first step in creating a comic essay may be for students to create a claim, state reasons and evidence for it, as well as anticipate arguments to that claim. The creation of a claim and its defense also aligns with good citizenship. Citizens must be able to argue and debate their claims with evidence (Cohen, Pickeral & Levine, 2010; College, Career and Civic C3 Framework, n.d). The specifics of this process may vary and depend on the instructor and the course. I assign a large comic assignment, similar to the comic essay put forth in this paper, toward the end of my History of American Education course taught to undergraduates, so students must draw on the ideas we have been discussing for a semester. I also set aside time to work with them and allow them to develop their own ideas based on this material. Teachers will presumably need to provide some time for discovery and brainstorming and really just allow students a familiarity with the material they wish students to utilize in the essay.

So now students have a claim they can reasonably defend. The next step in a traditional essay might be to have students create an outline where there detail how exactly they will defend this claim. In a comic essay, students can start to think of this claim as a story and how it might look visually. Once the student has a thesis, there are a few ways students can begin to turn this into a comic. Of course, these methods are not exhaustive and I encourage teachers to think of other methods. One method is more episodic and abstract. So, let's say a student has created this claim: *The common school movement, despite many advocates belief in its use to "Americanize" the increasing numbers of Irish immigrants, ultimately allowed immigrants and the poor, at least over time, a method of emancipation, this is because the schools, however imperfect and classist, laid the foundation for universal education in the United States*. Students could first begin to break this claim down into episodes and think of what they would draw/show to back it up. This can be a fecund opportunity for students to truly get their hands dirty with the events and analyze their situation to decide what they should illustrate. So, for our above example, students may want to draw Horace Mann and some of the well-known common school movement reformers and they may want to draw something related to Irish immigration as well as what they see as the more emancipatory elements of the common school. In addition, students should also be encouraged to show something related to any anticipated counterarguments to their claim. The length of the final assignment is also a pertinent variable here.

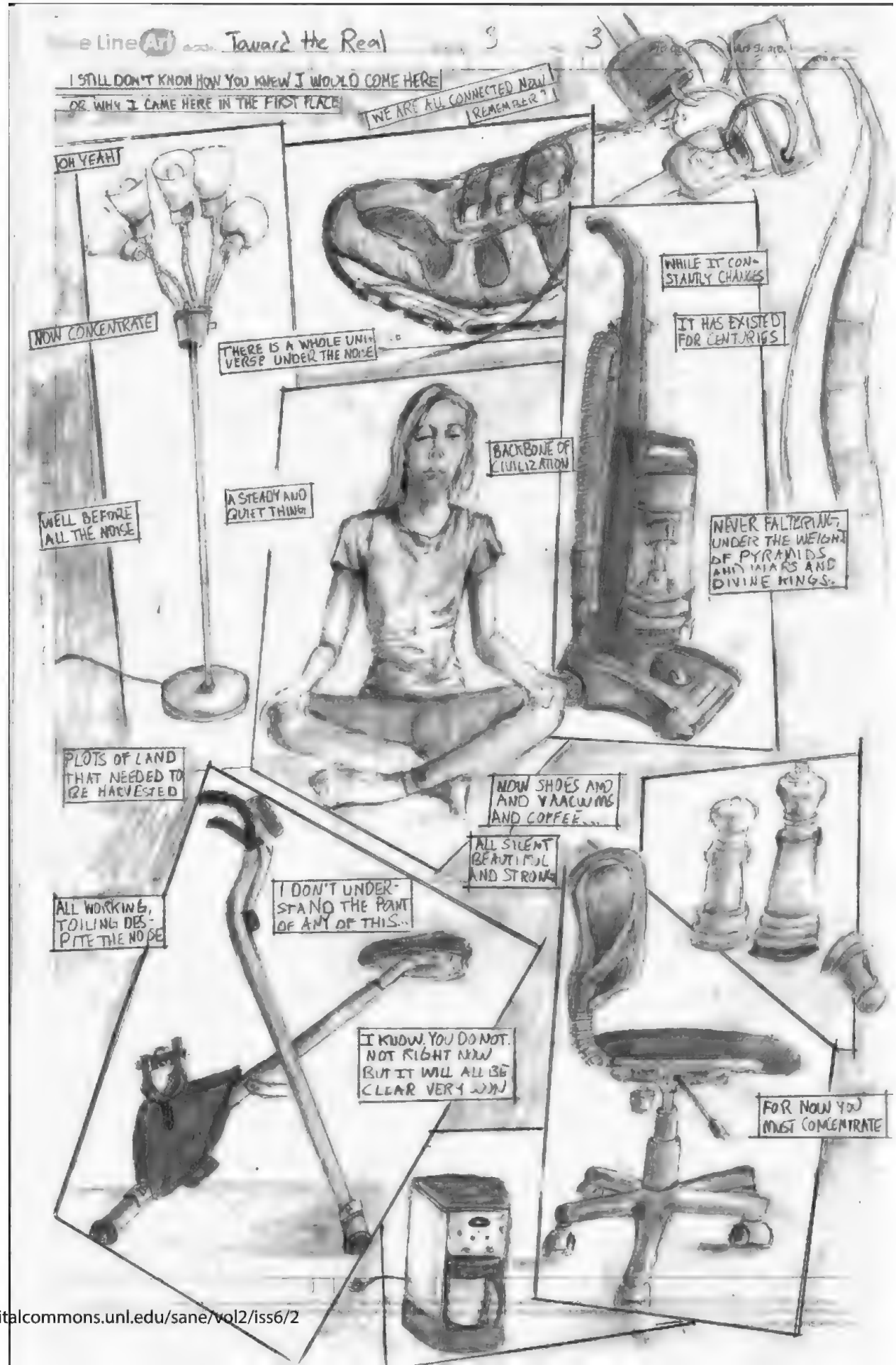
History can read like a story however (Chapin, 2015). As such, students can turn their claim in to a story. Here, the student can create a story which follows closely to recorded history, or, students can be more imaginative and incorporate elements of historical fictions. I personally opt for the latter formulation because I want students using imaginative elements and bringing their own ideas to the assignment. Potts (2013) and Abel and Madden (2008) talk about the notion of a story or narrative arc, where something disrupts the normal situation of the protagonist and the protagonist must then go on some type of quest and rectify the situation. Again, a one-on-one conversation between teacher and student is probably a necessity at this point as some students may be lost. I always try to build in some one-on-one time for this purpose, and during this time I love to prod students and hear their ideas as they brainstorm. So,

could Horace Mann or some type of character like him be the protagonist who must face obstacles and to put the common school on the map? Or maybe the student could create a truly fictional protagonist who is a child who wants to attend a common school and must face a number of obstacles such as others who seek to deny him or her. These ideas can all be fodder for a story or narrative arc.

At this stage, it is important to stress to students that their comic essays must be empirical, their essays must be created from the facts, ideas and theories they have read about (Barone & Eisner, 2011). Again, I think this aligns with the premise of this paper and the notions of citizenship sketched out earlier. These facts, ideas and theories however are creatively re-imagined into a new visual creation, the comic book. There should be an emphasis throughout the assignment on weaving historical information into the comic and making sure to highlight this information but at the same time encouraging student's imaginations. In keeping with the idea of an empirical comic essay, it might be good practice to assign an annotated bibliography. Students must cite the works that inspired them and help them create the comic. While I would not have students cite the actual works in the comic, the annotated bibliography can allow them to explain how the source inspired them. Further, when creating comics, influences may be more indirect (Sousanis, 2015b). Students can use the annotated bibliography to trace their more direct influences as well. I would also encourage the use of some non-scholarly sources, such as movies, because students are utilizing more fictional elements. Of course, scholarly sources should make up the bulk of the bibliography.

Again, if we follow Duncombe (2019) and posit that we need stories to help tell the truth, teachers can help their students think of history as a story and turn these empirical facts into elements of their plot which addresses citizenship concerns. This prospect is at the heart of this assignment. Below are some examples from my work *Toward the Real*. These pages serve as examples of empirical drawings. I took facts and ideas and wove them into my own creations. However, I did not use the comic's form to simply present these facts in visual form. Rather, I went a step further and used these facts and ideas to create my own ideas and interpretations. This might not be something teachers encourage their students to do- teachers might want students to follow closely to the facts which is fine. I provide these examples to simply show the potential of the comic's medium.

Figure 4. In these two pages, I took a well-known idea from Buddhism, the notion that all life is connected (Moore, 2016), and used it to build on my own ideas of interconnectedness. The first page looks at our connections with the mundane things of our lives, while the second page examines our connections with other humans. Rita, the protagonist, sits meditating in the centers of both pages. I tried to use non-standard layouts, such as odd shaped frames and concentric circles for effect. The odd shaped panels help call attention to these mundane things while the concentric circles foster a sense of connection.


e Line Art
Toward the Real
3
I STILL DON'T KNOW HOW YOU KNEW I WOULD COME HERE
OR WHY I CAME HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE
WE ARE ALL CONNECTED NOW
REMEMBER?
OH YEAH
NOW CONCENTRATE
THERE IS A WHOLE UNIVERSE UNDER THE NOISE
WHILE IT CONSTANTLY CHANGES
IT HAS EXISTED FOR CENTURIES
BACKBONE OF CIVILIZATION
A STEADY AND QUIET THING
WELL BEFORE ALL THE NOISE
NEVER FALTERING, UNDER THE WEIGHT OF PYRAMIDS AND WARS AND DIVINE KINGS.
PLOTS OF LAND THAT NEEDED TO BE HARVESTED
NOW SHOES AND VACUUMS AND COFFEE...
ALL SILENT BEAUTIFUL AND STRONG
I DON'T UNDERSTAND THE POINT OF ANY OF THIS...
ALL WORKING, TOILING DESPITE THE NOISE
I KNOW. YOU DO NOT. NOT RIGHT NOW BUT IT WILL ALL BE CLEAR VERY SOON
FOR NOW YOU MUST CONCENTRATE

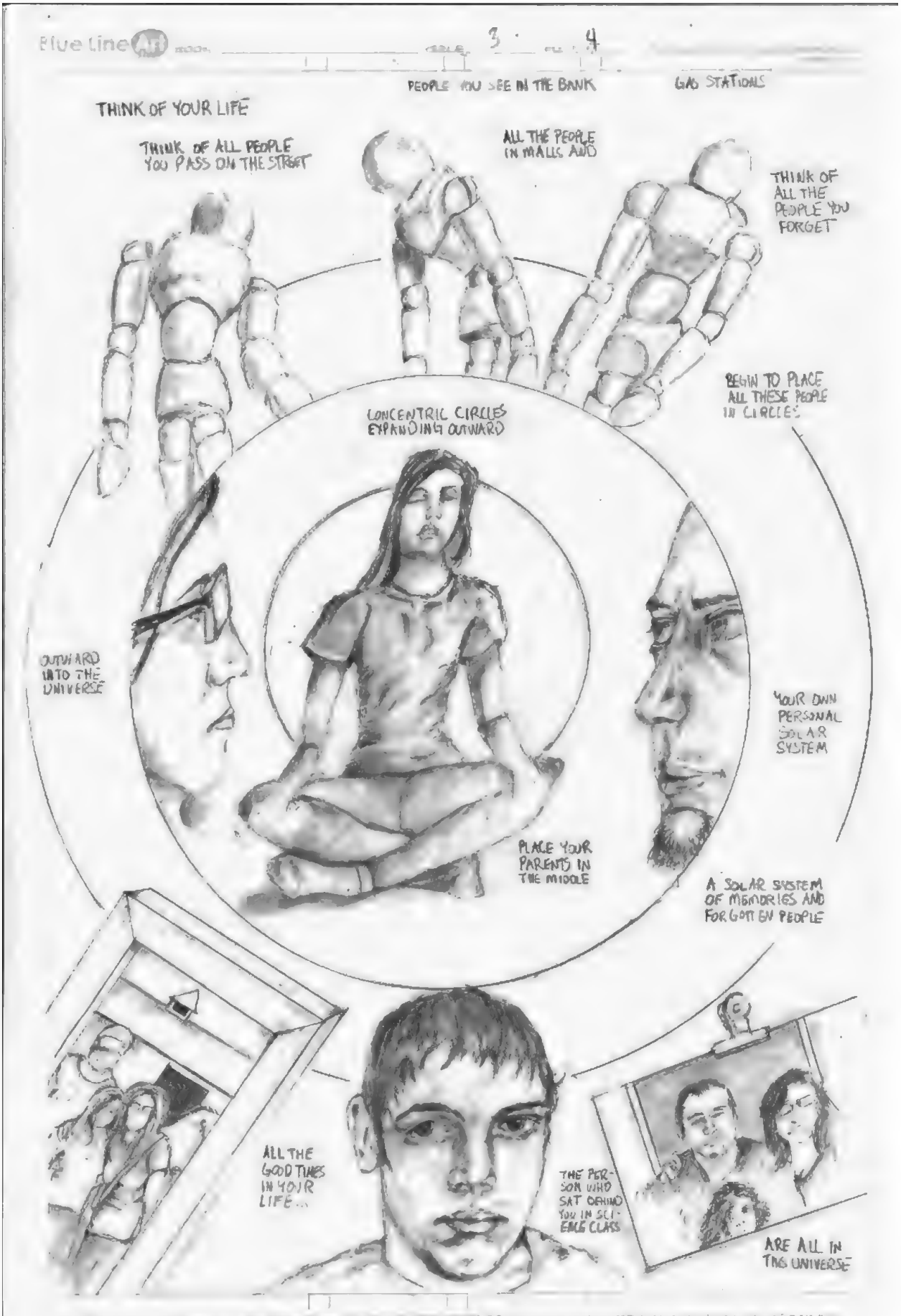

Blue Line Art
3 4
PEOPLE YOU SEE IN THE BANK
GAS STATIONS
THINK OF YOUR LIFE
THINK OF ALL PEOPLE YOU PASS ON THE STREET
ALL THE PEOPLE IN MALLS AND
THINK OF ALL THE PEOPLE YOU FORGET
BEGIN TO PLACE ALL THESE PEOPLE IN CIRCLES
CONCENTRIC CIRCLES EXPANDING OUTWARD
OUTWARD INTO THE UNIVERSE
YOUR OWN PERSONAL SOLAR SYSTEM
PLACE YOUR PARENTS IN THE MIDDLE
A SOLAR SYSTEM OF MEMORIES AND FORGOTTEN PEOPLE
ALL THE GOOD TIMES IN YOUR LIFE...
THE PERSON WHO SAT BEHIND YOU IN SCIENCE CLASS
ARE ALL IN THIS UNIVERSE

Figure 5. *Toward the Real.* This page touches on a number of thinkers from Rousseau, Baudrillard and the poet William Blake. Rousseau's well known opening in *The Social Contract* is paraphrased and his notion of chains is evoked. While not mentioned by name or quoted, the page centers on the French postmodernist thinker Jean Baudrillard and his ideas about representation. Finally, I invoke the ideas of 18th century poet William Blake and graft them to Baudrillard's ideas- calling for representation to embody infinite connections. These ideas are not fully explained but they are not supposed to be. We see literal chains from name to thing being snapped. Rather, I wanted to leave the reader with something to ponder.

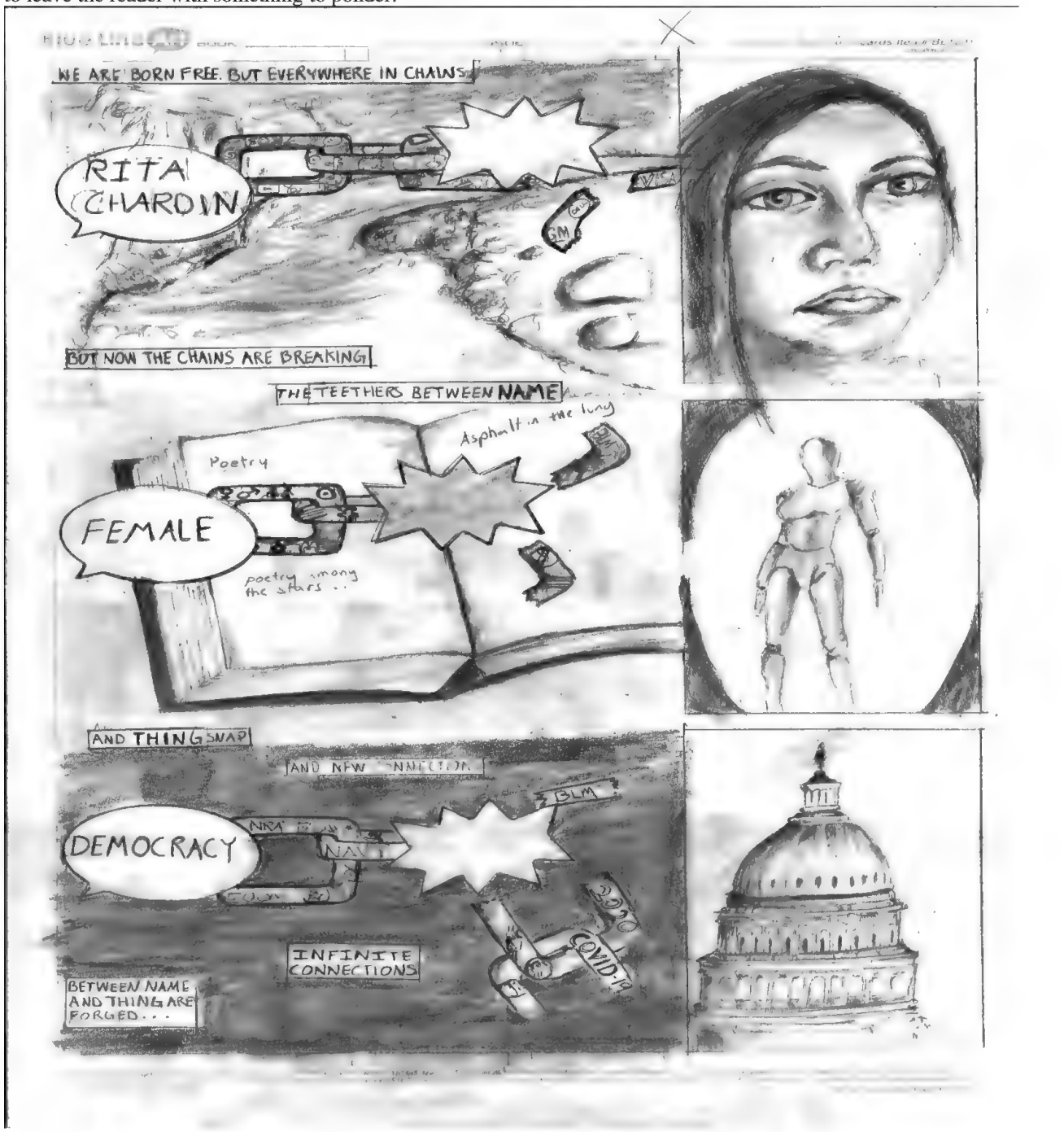
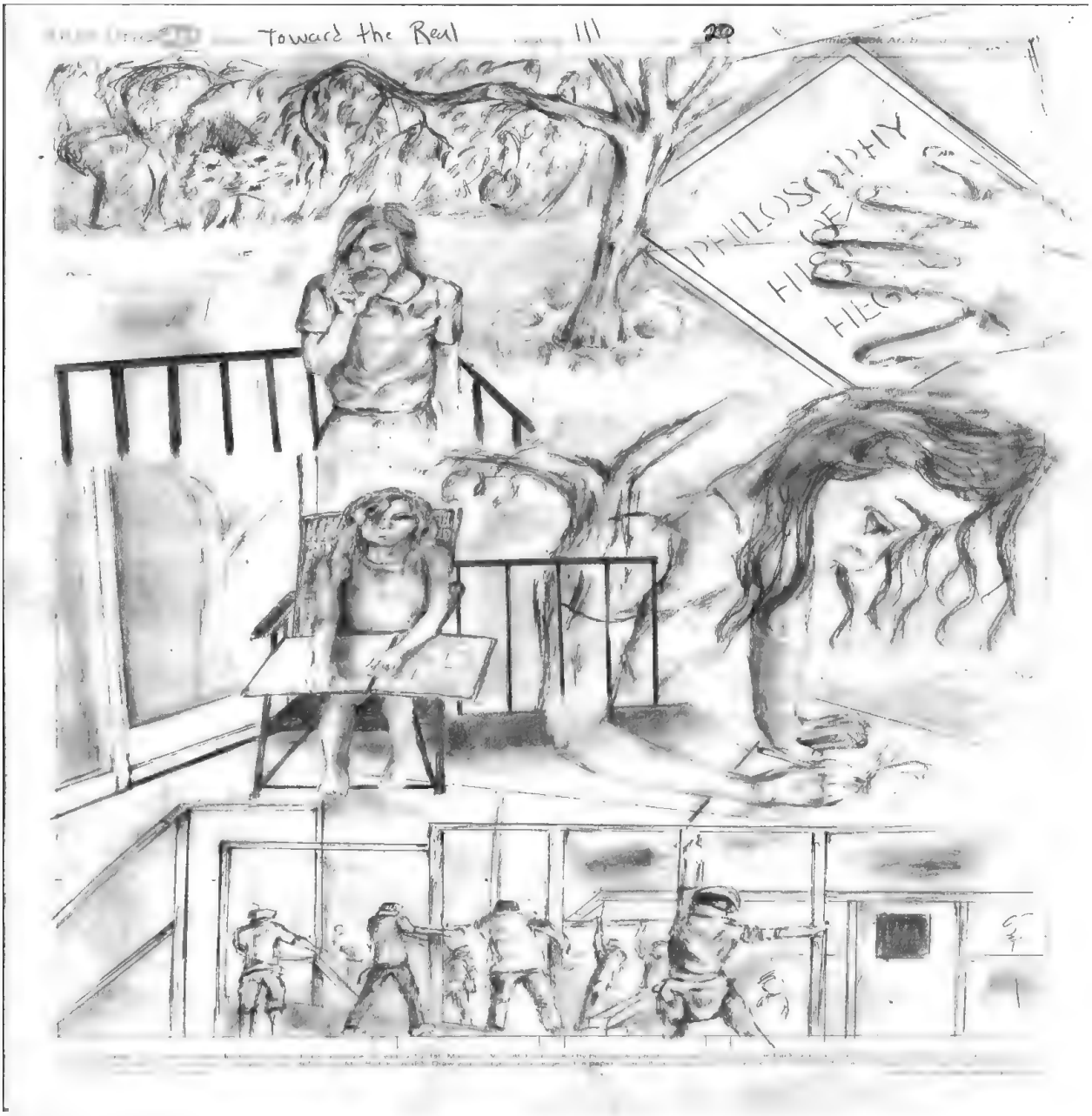


Figure 6. In this wordless page I tackle one of my favorite philosophical works; GWF Hegel's *Philosophy of History*. This work of philosophy postulates the idea of progress. The images do something of the same. We see images of nature (and a biblical reference to an apple), images of children reading and studying and workers building something new.



Panels and pages

Perhaps one of the greatest tools of the comic essay are panels. Panel size, shape and frequency all help to convey information (Duncan, Smith & Levitz, 2015; Gavaler, 2019; Miodrag, 2013; Sousanis, 2015a). If students grasp this fact, they can tell different types of stories that they might not be able to tell with words alone. Panels can call attention to the length of time that has elapsed, and story tempo and timing (McCloud, 1994; Duncan et al., 2015, Miodrag, 2013). The classic example given is that of *Watchmen*, by Alan Moore and Dave

Gibbons (Duncan et al., 2015; Groensteen, 2007; Potts, 2013). Moore and Gibbons utilized a standard nine panel configuration on most pages which created a very rhythmic and even story pace for most of the book, but when they deviated from this structure, the effect was all the more apparent. Of course, the absence of panels can also be utilized. The page as a whole unit is another important tool for creators (Cohn, 2009; Groensteen, 2007). Cohn (2009, 50) details a great example of how comics journalist Joe Sacco utilizes a series of constricting panels on one to give a sense of confinement (the character depicted was in prison), while on the next page, there are no panels, and the openness conveys a sense of release (when the character is realized from prison). I use this example in class. As noted earlier, McCloud's well known use of closure can also help students think about what to include and not to include in their essays (Kolk, 2020). Teachers can go over these types of examples in class to show how panels can be used to tell a story.

The use of (or absence of) panels can also call attention to new ways of reading the printed page (Cabero, 2019). Cabero argues for multidirectional readings, where the traditional reading order in English is altered (such as reading right to left, top to bottom or in circular patterns) and multilinear readings, where two or more simultaneous stories take place on a page. Multidirectional and multilinear capabilities may offer a new tool for thinking of citizenship, especially the type of symbols and stories that Duncombe (2019) argues for. We are bombarded with stories and we do not know what is true. Perhaps presenting multiple stories on a page is a way to represent and make some sense of this cacophony.

Perhaps the most important aspect of paneling for the purpose of this assignment is the notion of encapsulation. Encapsulation simply calls attention to what creators decide to depict in each frame, as well as what images creators decide to omit when telling the story (Duncan et al., 2015). This process can be an excellent method to think about historical events and the creation of a history. History is not simply a recreation, rather it is always a process of interpretation (Banks, Banks & Ambrose 1999; Getz & Clarke, 2016). This process can be especially fruitful when students create historical fiction or at least add imaginative elements. In one-on-one discussions, I have found a discussion of encapsulation to be very fruitful- I work with students and try to get them to think about what exactly to show and why they show should show it.

Simply put, when considering the claim they created, students must decide what to show. In my own experience, I have had student's utilize these tools of the comic medium with great success. One of my students, who grappled with a similar question posed in the common school movement claim made above (but for education as a whole), argued that education was both a means of liberation and social control. For scenes of social control, she utilized constructing panels to depict sad looking characters. For scenes of liberation, she did not use any panels in an effort to show freedom from constriction. Another student wanted to look at the experiences, and challenges, of both more affluent and poorer students. She utilized a multilinear design and created two simultaneous and parallel stories on each page of her comic. I thought these were excellent examples and my students were able to convey important ideas with the comic medium. In a wider sense, these conceptual tools outlined above align with the notions of citizenship education put forth earlier. Students need different tools at their disposal to create new truths.

Symbolism, Imagery, Color and Shading

A simple distinction between symbolism and imagery that I like to use is the one posed by Schmidt (2018): symbols are things that most people are familiar with (such as flags, corporate symbols or political symbols like a Swastika), while imagery is something specific to a story (McCloud, 1994). To be sure there is much more to symbolism and imagery, but I think this is an easy way to frame this distinction. Students can think through how they can utilize well known symbols, and create imagery for their comics which help to back up their claim. My students utilized a number of well-known symbols in their comics, such as pencils, priests, flags, shamrocks (for Irish immigration) and crucifixes to name a few. At the same time, students also created specific images for their comics which helped to convey ideas. Again, linking to Duncombe (2019), symbols are important in our political climate, we need to symbols to convey political ideas and have those ideas resonate.

Another impactful tool is the use of color and shading. I do not require my students to use color, although many do. In the aforementioned example, my student rendered all the scenes detailing social control in drab pencil, while all the scenes detailing liberation in vibrant colors. My other student showed all the scenes with the affluent student in vibrant color, while the student from the poorer background was rendered in more muted colors (See Figure 8). Since she used a multilinear configuration, these contrasting colors really stood out on the page. I think my student's essay really shows how a student can create new types of messages which grapple with citizenship and history.

Style and other elements

Another consideration is that of drawing style (Eisner, 2008; Duncan et al., 2015) as well as other elements of comics, such as lettering and font, and speech bubbles (Hutchinson, 2009). Students may predictably lament that they cannot draw, but I have found that even students who cannot draw, can still utilize some type of stylistic considerations to their story. Sometimes students may use more cartoony characters and add an element of lightheartedness to their comics. Other times, a simplified style can add great weight and seriousness to a comic. One student of mine in a social studies methods class depicted scenes from the founding of the state of Maryland (See Figure 7). One of her scenes show a slave toiling in a hot sun. This scene was interspaced among other more positive scenes such as priest saying mass. I thought the simple scene, which was also wordless, was powerful and called attention to the more sinister elements of the founding of the US. Another student, who was a good artist, expertly utilized style. For the same assignment, he depicted the volatile history of the city of Baltimore. His art style was frantic and hectic, and what better way to show various scenes that Baltimore has experienced over the last two centuries, from riots at the beginning of the Civil War, though labor unrest right through the Freddie Gray protests? Other factors such as lettering and fonts, as well as different types of speech bubbles can also be used to convey information in new ways (Hutchinson, 2009). Again, all of these options may allow students to create new types of essays and messages, and ultimately, new statements in regard to citizenship.

Assessment

How can teachers accurately assess the work of their students? I find assessment when utilizing comics a tricky venture, but also one rife with opportunity. I do not want to prescribe specific and constructing standards, but at the same time, students need some direction and I need benchmarks to guide my assessment (Barone & Eisner, 2012).

Below is a short framework. I have listed the elements of a comic essay on the left side

and then listed some more technical questions regarding how the elements of the comic relate back to the claim. This is only meant to be rough guide. Not all elements need to be present. This all depends on the discretion of the teacher. I view the assessment tool as a conversation starter. I like to talk to students, both as class discussions and in one-on-one discussions, and simply ask them about their projects and gauge their level of understanding. These questions can help direct teacher's conversations, as well as let students know beforehand what is expected of them.

Figure 1. Comic Essay Assessment Tool

Criteria	Criteria
Claims/Reason/Evidence/Acknowledgments	Is there a claim present? Is it defendable? How does the claim address more progressive citizenship concerns, such as vulnerable populations, empowerment and equality to name a few?
Story	Is there a narrative or story arc? Does the story arc help to defend or shed light on the thesis?
Paneling/Encapsulation	Do the encapsulated scenes relate back to the claim in a reasonable way? Do the encapsulated scenes tell a logical or credible story related to the claim? How are students utilizing both visual and textual elements to back up their claim?
Symbolism/Imagery	How does the symbolism and imagery used in the story relate back to the claim?
Color, shading and style	Does the shading, color and/or style help advance the story? Does the shading, color and/or style align with the claim in anyway?
Other Considerations	What might students be able to accomplish with the tools of the comic medium that they could not accomplish with text alone? How does this question apply to the specific work in question? How did the students utilize any other features (e.g. font, speech bubbles) to back up the claim?
Works Cited/Annotated Bibliography	Are these textual and visual elements empirical, in the sense that they are real life facts, ideas, theories or interpretations the student is taking from scholarly sources? Does the bibliography show how the student utilized sources to create the essay?
Citizenship	How did students utilize the elements of the comics medium to call attention to hopes and dreams and inspire people? Can this comic serve a "dream" to

	inspire people to think differently about history and/or the current state of affairs? How so?

Examples

Creating a comic along with students is good practice, and it shows students that you are willing to grapple with the complexities of creating a graphic novel. Carter (2013) and Thompson (2018) both call attention to the benefits of teachers creating along with their students, and I have followed their advice (see my drawing throughout the article). As noted earlier, I assign a number of comics activities in my own college courses. As students are creating their comics, I show them examples of my own creations. I show students how I have utilized ideas such as multilinearity, shading considerations and symbolism to name a few. My art work is serviceable, but Marvel or DC will not be calling me anytime soon. Rather, my artwork is a means to an end. The end is a new and powerful formulation of citizenship for our age. What follows are some of my own examples, as well as examples from my students, which are all used with permission.

Figure 7. This assignment called for students to consider different aspects in the founding of the state of Maryland. The fourth frame stood out to me. The fourth frame depicts a slave toiling in a hot sun, and is juxtaposed with more positive scenes of the founding of Maryland. I think this assignment expertly shows how style considerations and paneling can be utilized. My student had to decide what to encapsulate. She was able to encapsulate contrasting events to convey a positive and negative picture of the founding of Maryland. Her style, while simple, I think adds to the gravity of the comic, especially in the fourth frame. Comic created by Katie Tennant.

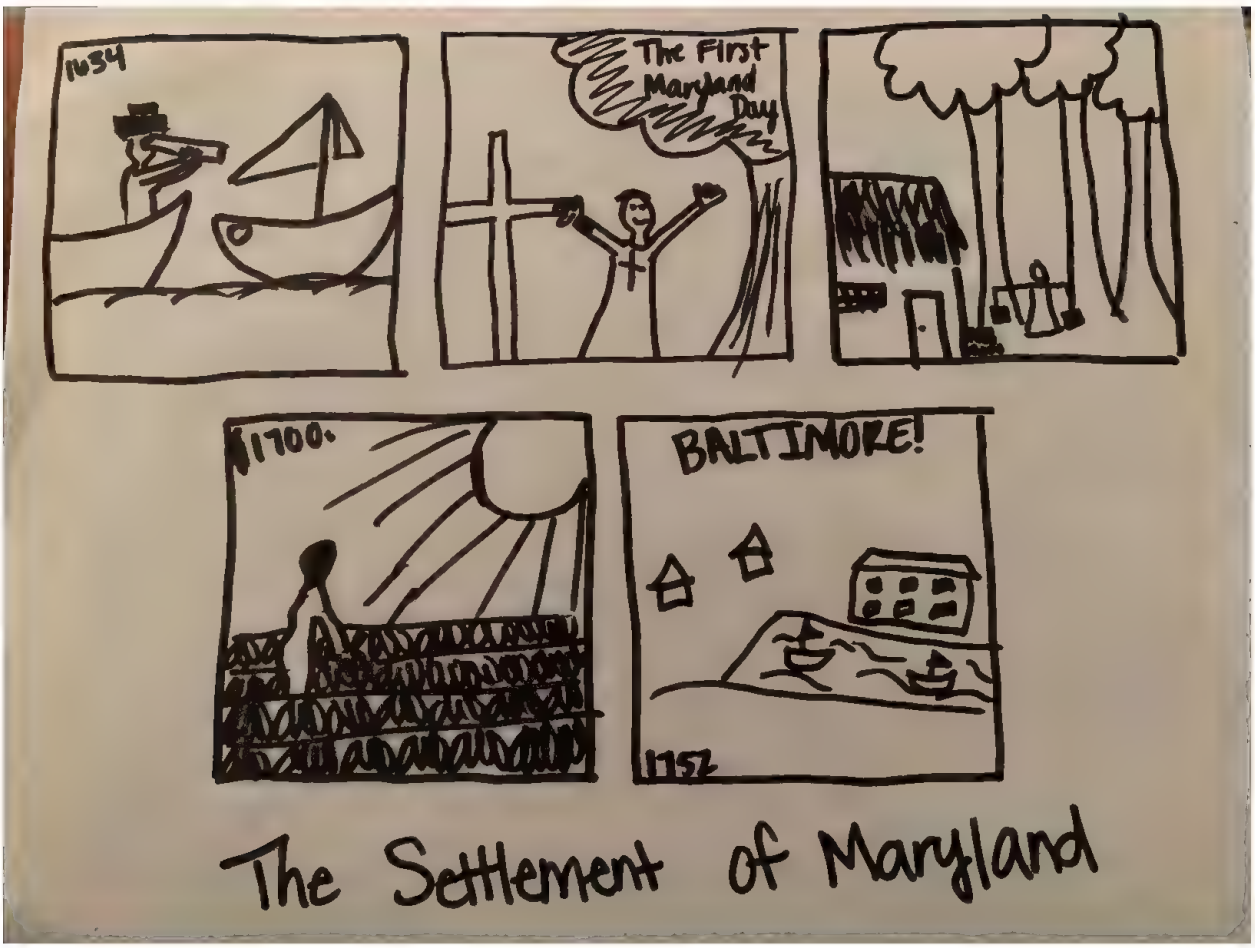


Figure 8; This student utilized multilinearity. She told two simultaneous stories on the same page. Moreover, each story is told with different colors and the contrasting colors are important to her ideas as a whole. Image by Christina Schell.

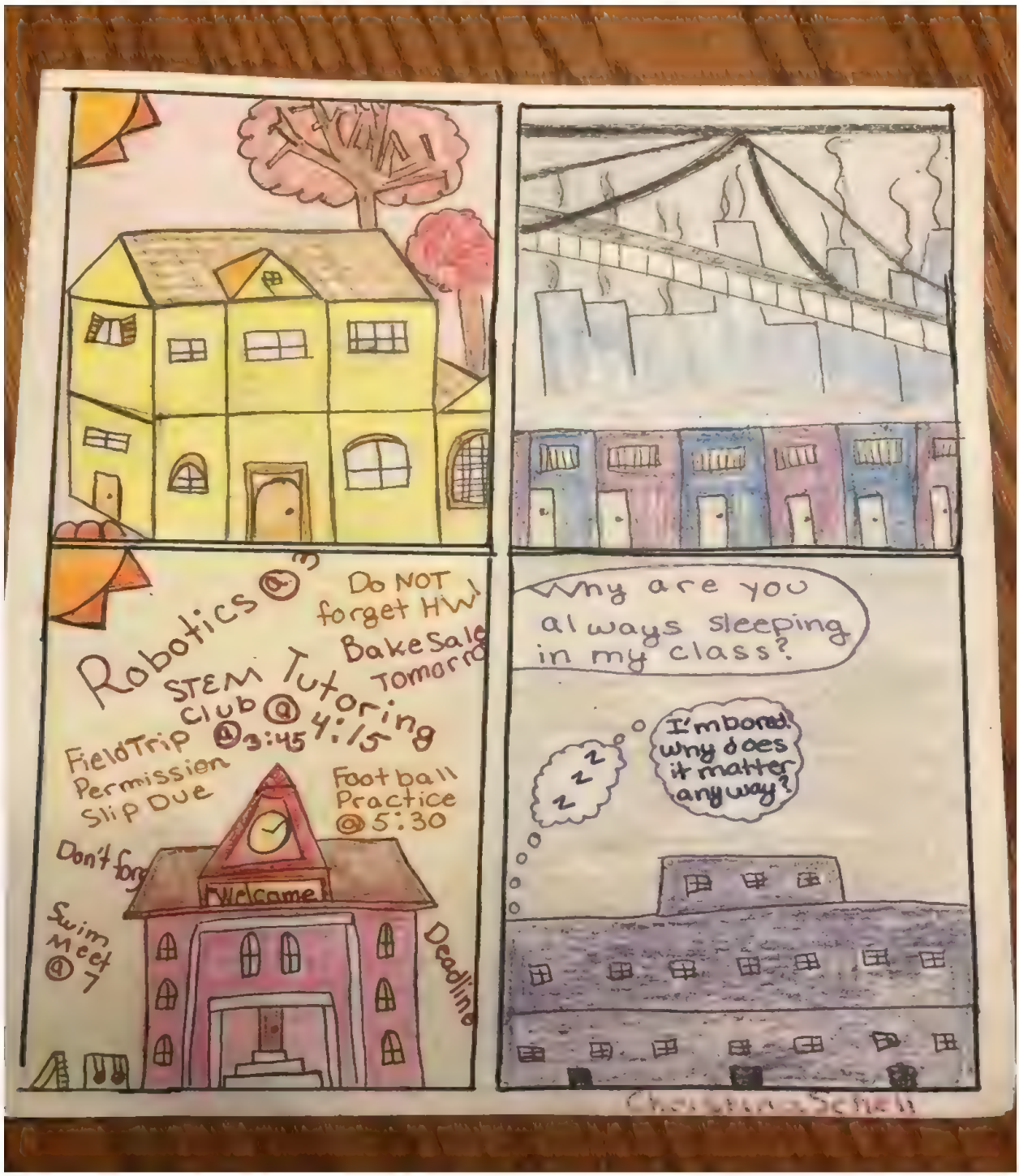


Figure 9. This is a student example of a multidirectional comic. Teacher certification, English only laws and old field schools in the south were some events depicted. These events are not in a traditional linear path. This student also drew a grid to depict zoom education during the pandemic.

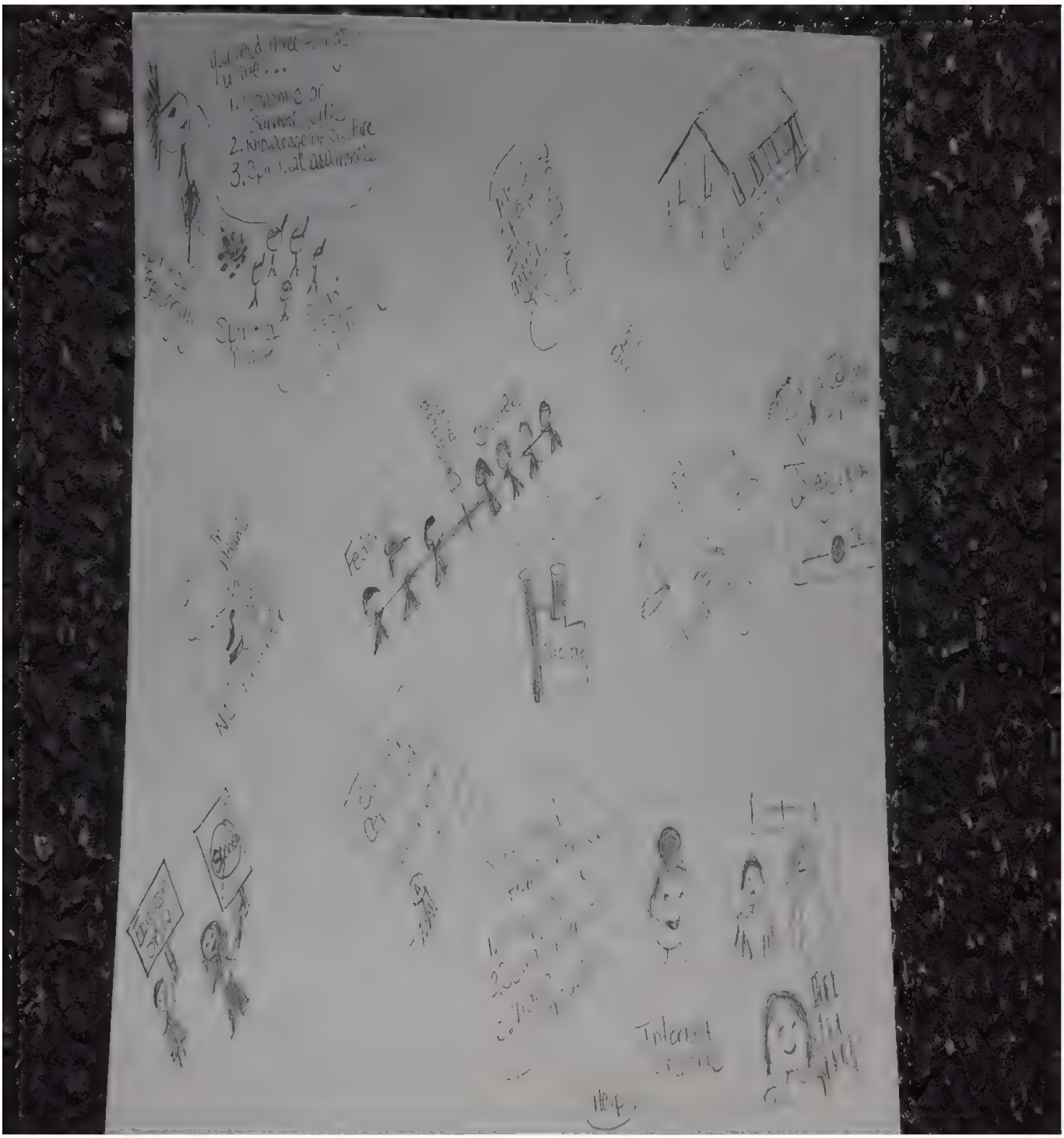
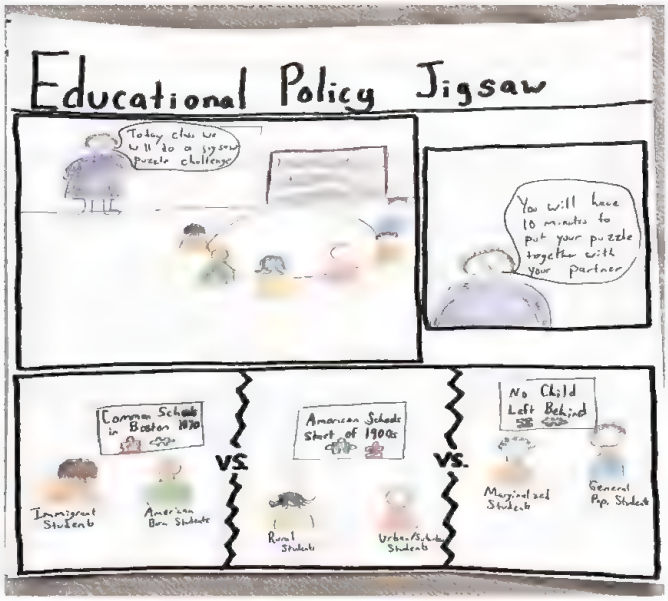
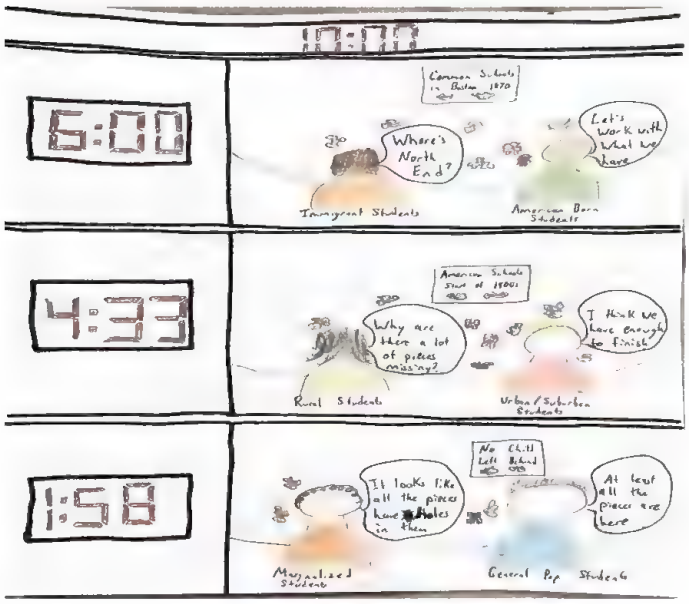
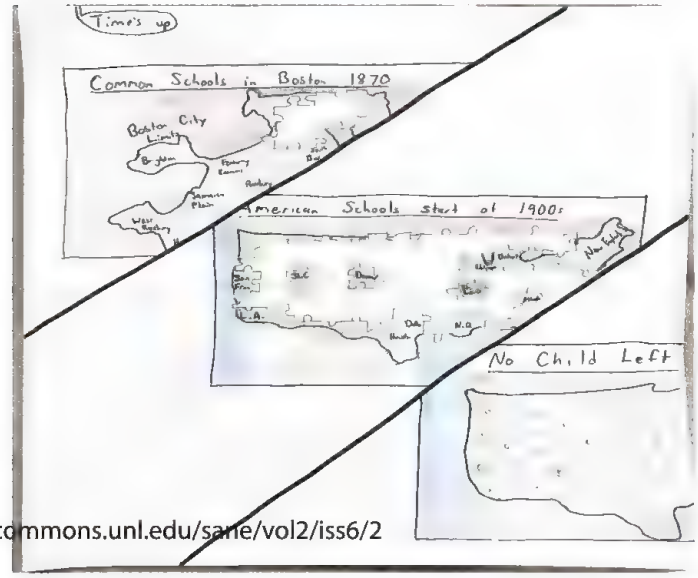


Figure 10. This student's thesis read: "Educational policy throughout United States' history has opened access for education to more and more students, however there are always students for who the policy does not adequately address and truly include." In the comic, the students who benefit from the status quo- predominantly white students, finish their puzzles quicker than other students such as immigrants. The entire comic plays on the familiar symbol of a jigsaw puzzle and the struggle for equal opportunity.


Educational Policy Jigsaw
Today class we will do a jigsaw puzzle challenge
You will have 10 minutes to put your puzzle together with your partner
Common Schools in Boston 1870
VS.
American Schools start of 1900s
VS.
No Child Left Behind
Immigrant Students
American Born Students
Rural Students
Urban/Suburban Students
Marginalized Students
General Pop. Students


6:00
Common Schools in Boston 1870
Where's North End?
Let's work with what we have
Immigrant Students
American Born Students
4:33
American Schools start of 1900s
Why are there a lot of pieces missing?
I think we have enough to finish
Rural Students
Urban/Suburban Students
1:58
No Child Left Behind
It looks like all the pieces have holes in them
At least all the pieces are here
Marginalized Students
General Pop Students


Time's up
Common Schools in Boston 1870
Boston City Limits
American Schools start of 1900s
No Child Left

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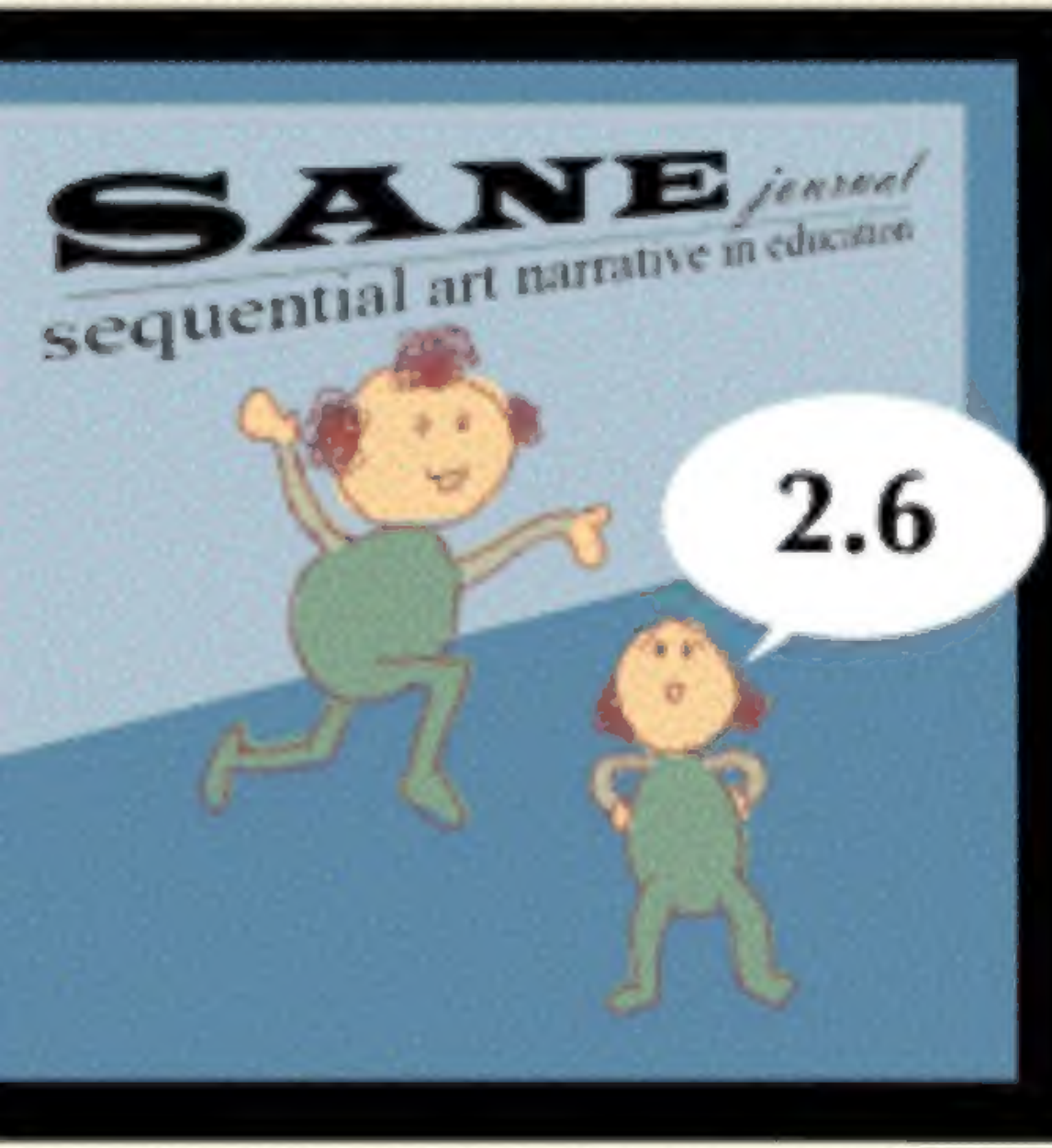
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